



*Photo by Eve A. Baker*



*Congressional Gold Medal*

## **Charles Frazier**

### **Served in the Marine Corps during World War II**

Charles Frazier served in the 8th Field Regiment Unit, 5th Marine Division, and attended training at Montford Point, North Carolina. The Montford Point Marines were the first blacks to serve in the Marine Corps after President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order in 1941 requiring all branches of the military to accept people of color. Montford Point was a segregated facility, split by railroad tracks that delineated white and black sides. Black Marines couldn't go into white restaurants or shops, not in Jacksonville near the camp or in towns where the train stopped. They rode in a section of the train designated for blacks and had to ask their white counterparts to buy them food along the way.

On February 22, 1945, Frazier landed on Iwo Jima. Frazier has said as a black man, he and his unit were first kept separate from the white Marines, but during battle they all served together. He looks back fondly at his time as a Marine, saying it taught him lessons about himself he'll never forget.

After his Marine Corps service, Frazier worked for the federal government for 36 years. After he retired, he said he was home for six weeks and couldn't stand it, so he got a part-time job driving cars at an automotive dealership in Gaithersburg, Maryland and has been there for over 30 years.

He was born and raised near Gaithersburg, Maryland. In 1944, he graduated from Lincoln High School in Rockville, the County's then only black high school. After he graduated, he was immediately drafted into the military and told by the recruiter that he would be a Marine, like it or not.

On June 28, 2012, 368 former Montford Point Marines - including Frazier - received the Congressional Gold Medal from several members of congress and leaders of the Marine Corps, who honored the men for their part in desegregating the Marine Corps and the military as a whole. Frazier was also honored at a Montgomery County event on September 19th, 2012, that recognized County residents who served in WWII.

Frazier currently resides in Germantown, Maryland.